

# Death and Convention

*Monet's depiction of his wife Camille on her deathbed presents the stark reality of a wasted corpse. This often overlooked yet remarkable painting reveals much about the artist's rejection of orthodox religious ideas about death*

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The painting now entitled *Camille Monet on Her Deathbed* remained untitled, unknown and undiscussed until relatively recently (Fig. 1). According to Mme Claudette Lindsey at the Fondation Claude Monet, it was 'more than probably kept in Claude Monet's bedroom at Giverny' (Fig. 2), though for how long is unclear.<sup>1</sup> It first became widely known after it was bought by gallery owner Katia Granoff from Michel Monet and then donated to the Louvre, which put it on display at the Jeu de Paume in 1963. It was not seriously discussed prior to William Seitz's 1960 monograph on Monet.<sup>2</sup> Both leading Monet expert Paul Hayes Tucker and the Musée d'Orsay's *Le Dernier Portrait* (2002) interpret the work in terms of continuity with the tradition of commemorative deathbed portraiture.<sup>3</sup>

Recently Sophie Barthélémy even describes Monet's painting as a saintly image of a woman at peace, bathed in a caressing supernatural light, suggesting that this self-professed atheist was actually bringing in a 'note of hope' in the introduction of a 'light of divine origin'.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, I argue that Monet's painting contradicts the tradition of deathbed portraiture and its attendant meanings, and is the opposite of the involuntary quasi-religious spirituality seen by Barthélémy. My aim is to use this exceptional painting to establish not only Monet's atheism but also the way that this connected to broader patterns of discourse associated with that wing of French republicanism known during this period as Radicalism.

Let us first turn to Catholic visual culture of the 1860s.<sup>5</sup> In one set of prints published by Turgis in 1868, for example, young girls

are taught by nuns to lead a virtuous life of service, prayer and motherhood. Their end shall be one of deserved rest, being lifted to heaven 'with the name of Mary in one's mouth, as an olive branch' for the gates of Paradise. Death is a peaceful transfiguration through light, comforted by an attendant priest and supportive angel (Fig. 3). In another print, belief leads to seeing bliss and being transported to heaven by angels (Fig. 4). In popular sermonising of the period, there was an increasing emphasis upon being reunited with one's loved ones in heaven, although that position was not fully orthodox.

From the Romantic period onwards, there was a deepening of the experience of the death of those close to oneself. In developing bourgeois culture, the problem of family loss intensified as extended family networks gave





way to a focus upon more intense inter-personal relationships within the nuclear family.<sup>6</sup>

However, in mid-19th century representations of deathbed scenes death is generally presented as serene and beautiful. In the words of Chateaubriand, such images invite us to ‘come and see the most beautiful spectacle that the earth can present: come and see the death of the believer’.<sup>7</sup> A good death involved knowledge that death was coming and spiritual preparation for it, unlike the assumption for many today that a swift and unexpected death is best.

Michel Vovelle talks about a ‘pastoral of death’ that became central to Catholic teaching and apologetics.<sup>8</sup> According to another historian of death, Philippe Ariès, death was becoming less vividly connected with the possibility of hellfire damnation. Even preachers came to play down this theme of damnation by the second half of the 19th century, and *Ages of Life* prints reveal images of paradise replacing those of hell. However, as the sense of selfhood developed, death was no longer something that could be tamed by being part of a larger community. The emphasis on the private nuclear family made the loss of close relatives a subjectively deepened painful experience. Thus death had to become ‘moving and beautiful like nature’, a focus of beauty or even sublimity constructed to channel strong feelings of loss: Death now ceased to be sad. It was exalted as a moment to be desired. Untamed nature invaded the stronghold of culture, where it encountered humanized nature and merged with it in the compromise of ‘beauty’...The compromise of beauty...was also a concession, for it restored to this phenomenon that people had tried to diminish an extraordinary glamour.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, for Ariès, the invention of the ‘beautiful death’ achieved a compromise solution between the meaningfulness of death to an earlier culture and the modern attitude to death as essentially lacking in meaning.<sup>10</sup>

Dévéria’s serene image of Mme Récamier uses drapes to create a heavenly realm around



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an otherwise simply tidied-up image of everyday sleep (Fig. 5). In Regnault’s portrayal of Mme Mazois her head is propped high to allow viewing by mourners, though the effect is also to negate the lifelessness of the body, so that it hardly differs from an intimate sleeping portrait (Fig. 6). The point of these images is to remove all traces of the agony of suffering, to suggest eternal peace, as if the figure has simply fallen asleep.

If we contrast *Camille Monet on Her Deathbed* with these images, however, we see a number of significant differences. Monet presents the deceased not in an eternal profile, sideways on, or at an angle, but as seen frontally, and from above, so that the image on this large scale is much more confrontational. Camille’s upper torso and head are shifted into the top left quadrant of the canvas. This

**1** *Camille sur son lit de mort*, 1879  
Claude Monet (1840–1926)  
Oil on canvas, 90×68cm  
© Musée d’Orsay, Dist. RMN / Patrice Schmidt

**2** Claude Monet’s bedroom  
in Giverny  
Fondation Claude Monet Giverny

**3** ‘Le Repos: portant a la bouche le nom de Marie, comme un rameau d’olivier, je m’envolerais et reposerais’  
Published 1868 by Turgis, Paris  
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris

**4** *L’Alléluia éternel*, c. 1888  
Engraving on card, 12.3×8.2cm  
Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, Paris



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placement, together with the tilting of her head to the right, removes any notion of iconic centrality, underscoring a sense of glimpsing vision. While looking down on the deathbed scene, Monet places Camille’s head high up in the pictorial field, so that the final image is flattened spatially and seems to dissolve into paint strokes exposing the bare canvas.<sup>11</sup>

The painting is not a contemplative image of a woman in eternal repose, beautiful in death. Camille’s dying involved agonising pain,<sup>12</sup> and Monet’s painting shows it. The dead face is thin and wasted, the jaw strapped in place but the lips parted, making the contrast between the tight shut eyes and frozen but open mouth all the more tragic. Light strokes cross the face, veiling her left eyelid and defining her nose simply with a patch of lower shadow, so that all the emphasis of the face falls on that mouth which will never speak again to the artist but which he almost wills to speak, given the unusually parted lips. Moreover, the idea of committing a dead figure to posterity in an imposing and enduring commemorative image was undermined by such an emphasis on apparent fleetingness of perception and execution.

On the basis of expert medical advice, Mary Matthews Gedo reckoned that the cause of death was cervical cancer.<sup>13</sup> Monet underwent a religious ceremony of marriage on 31 August 1879 in order to allow for the providing of the last sacrament to Camille on the same day. The priest’s records, referring to the ‘réhabilitation *in extremis*’ of their marriage,<sup>14</sup> clarifies the non-recognition of their civil marriage in the Church’s eyes, and the relation between the religious marriage and the provision of last rites. The 32-year-old Camille died at around 10.30am on 5 September 1879 and friends or neighbours witnessed the death certificate at 4pm at the Vétheuil Mairie. On 7 September Camille was placed in her coffin by the Confrères de la Charité and was buried in the local church, with immediate members of the two families and a few friends in attendance.<sup>15</sup> All this process conforms to the social pattern of 19th-century death, down to the friends and neighbours dealing with the

W numbers refer to catalogued paintings, WL letters to catalogued letters, in D. Wildenstein, *Claude Monet: Biographie et catalogue raisonné*, [five vols.], Lausanne/Paris, 1974–91.

**1/** This information was provided in two communications of 17 February 2009 and 2 April 2009. The second letter suggests that the painting was in the bedroom ‘probably for a short period of time’ and was given to Michel by Monet, but no evidential basis for this conclusion was supplied. The first art historian to record this original location was R. Butler, *Hidden in the Shadow of the Master*, New Haven, 2008, p. 204 (unreferenced). A process of elimination might at the very least support Claudette Lindsey’s claim. The studio in the new annexe housed stacks of new pictures waiting to go to dealers and to show collectors. Descriptions of the house staircase hang indicate that it contained some of his works by other artists, which continued into the mauve drawing room and dining room. The house drawing room that had once served as his studio contained the mini-retrospective of Monet’s work, photographs of which are often reproduced without any indication of *Camille on Her Deathbed* being among them (C. Joyes, *Monet at Giverny*, London, 1985, pp. 32–36, 72 and 88–89). Monet’s private bedroom was unphotographed and is the preferred location for such a private unsettling work. Yet it is still surprising that the work was never mentioned as the bedroom and adjoining room contained works that seem to have been shown to some friends (G. van der Kemp, *A Visit to Giverny*, no location, c. 1983, p. 56).

**2/** John Rewald’s *The History of Impressionism*, 4th edn, London, 1946/1973, pp. 431–33, did reproduce in place of discussion or illustration Monet’s famous story about painting the image and being preoccupied with colour effects, as transmitted to us in G. Clemenceau, trans. G. Boas, *Claude Monet*, 1928/1930, Paris/New York, pp. 19–20. This story had certain complicated functions to perform in Monet’s self-presentation, and I have chosen to bracket it out as documentation here.

**3/** E. Hérat et al., *Musée d’Orsay, Le Dernier Portrait*, Paris, 2002, p. 63, and P. Tucker, *Claude Monet: Life and Art*, New Haven, 1995, p. 103.

**4/** Réunion des Musées Nationaux, *Ombres et lumières: Quatre siècles de peinture française*, Paris, 2005, p. 262. Interestingly, the 2006 exhibition catalogue *Six Feet Under: Autopsie de notre rapport aux morts*, Kunstmuseum, Bern, presents a completely contrary reading of the painting, with which I am more in sympathy. Matthias Freher’s essay ‘Homage: the beloved and revered dead’ (pp. 129–135) prefaces its discussion of the Monet painting and other images of the dead with the remark that all this was ‘a long-term consequence of the wave of secularisation that followed the

French Revolution, and which left the artist to deal with existential issues alone’ (p. 129). However, such a broad perspective does rather need further contextualising with attention to the different attitudes around death and their ideological ramifications (in this case, in the earlyish Third Republic).

**5/** My examples are drawn from the following corpus of images: C. Rosenbaum-Dondaine/Musée-galerie de la Seita, *L’image de pitié en France, 1814–1914*, Paris, 1984.

**6/** I am drawing here on P. Ariès, trans. H. Weaver, *The Hour of Our Death*, 1977/1983, Harmondsworth, pp. 609ff.

**7/** Quoted in Hérat et al., op. cit. in n. 3 above, p. 47.

**8/** M. Vovelle, *La Mort et L’Occident*, Paris, 1983, quoted in Hérat et al., op. cit. in n. 3 above, p. 47.

**9/** Ariès, op. cit. in n. 6 above, p. 610.

**10/** *Ibid.*, p. 610.

**11/** Hérat et al., op. cit. in n. 3 above, p. 63, claim to see child mourners around the bedside in the upper right. However, such ‘rediscovering’ of figures in the painting’s periphery becomes problematic if we accept that the act of artistically ‘seizing’ the visual field takes priority over the identity of the figures here.

**12/** As Alice Hoschedé wrote to her mother-in-law, ‘the poor woman really suffered, it was a long and terrible agony, and she was conscious to the last minute’ (letter from Alice Hoschedé to Mme Hoschedé mère, 12 September 1879, quoted in Wildenstein, vol. I, 1974, p. 98). Monet’s letter to De Bellio from 1876/77 (WL99) also mentions her suffering terribly.

**13/** M. Matthews Gedo, ‘Mme Monet on her deathbed’, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 288, no. 8 (August 2002), p. 928. Gedo consulted Dr John Lurain, Northwestern University Medical Center, for this diagnosis. This would fit the three-year duration of the illness and the vague reference in Monet’s 1876/7 correspondence to ‘an ulceration of the womb’ (WL99). See also J. Harris, ‘Camille on her deathbed’, *Archives of General Psychiatry*, vol. 60, no. 1 (January 2003), p. 13, which suggests that it was the early phase of bereavement characterised by denial and disbelief that gave Monet the objectivity to portray his wife thus. Such a psychological approach is bound to ignore the socially transgressive act of painting in such circumstances.

**14/** Wildenstein, vol. I, p. 98.

**15/** Butler, op. cit. in n. 1 above, p. 201. Butler assumes Camille’s mother and sister in Paris were not present as ‘that tie had long since been sundered’.

**16/** Alice Hoschedé letter to Mme Hoschedé mère, 12 September 1879, quoted in Wildenstein, vol. I, p. 98.

**17/** E. Badone, *The Appointed Hour*, Berkeley, 1989, p. 62. The focus of Badone’s study is Brittany, but photographs of deathbed scenes confirm the use of sheets or veils elsewhere in France.



business side of death. The customary two days prior to the burial was called the *veillée mortuaire*, and involved a washing and laying out of the corpse (*toilette de morts*), followed by a two-day vigil of family members. We know that this took place because of a letter written by Alice Hoschedé, whose family shared the Vétheuil house with Monet’s family and who eventually became Monet’s second wife. Alice’s letter to her own mother-in-law dated 12 September 1879 reads: My big daughters have been very courageous and kind; they have helped me in all the sad last duties and remained for two days watching over the poor dead woman. These are great lessons for them and they learned early on all the sadnesses of the world.<sup>16</sup>

By the late 19th century the dead were presented clothed rather than naked and covered simply with a sheet or shroud, and women were often dressed in their wedding attire. Hands would be crossed, holding a crucifix or/and rosary, with flowers on the deathbed as well. (All we can be certain of seeing in the case of the Monet painting is the end of a cut stalk suggesting flowers.) Ellen Badone describes the typical scenario of the *veillée mortuaire* thus: The *lit de mort* and the room in which the *veillée* took place were the focus for aesthetic attention. A canopy of fine linen sheets was arranged over the *lit de mort*... The name given to the canopy of sheets arranged over the *lit de mort* – the *chapelle blanche*, or white chapel – further emphasizes the sacred, ritual quality of the *veillée*.<sup>17</sup>

In Le Blondel’s 1850 photograph we see such an arrangement of sheets around a dead child (Fig. 8), while in the case of Adolphe Thiers’ deathbed a whole corner of the room has been aesthetically draped (Fig. 7). We do not know how far this aestheticising of the space of the Monet bedroom went, but a veil of some sort immediately over the face separating Monet from his beloved may be what is represented by those various diagonal paintstrokes across the body in Monet’s

painting.<sup>18</sup> There would have been a crucifix and candle beside the bed, and possibly a saucer with holy water and a sprig of boxwood (an evergreen symbol of immortality) or some sprinkler. Any visitors to the deathbed, if Catholic, would have stood for a moment to say a prayer, and then possibly made the sign of the cross over the corpse with the sprig or sprinkler, carrying drops of holy water over onto the corpse.<sup>19</sup>

Monet’s painting of his deceased wife was, then, deeply transgressive in Catholic terms. He was using the everyday process of painting as his own way of coming to terms with her death from an atheistical Radical viewpoint. He must have been doing this alongside Alice and her daughters performing their own Catholic *veillée mortuaire*. But whereas they were praying for her safe passage to an after-life, Monet was confronting the end of her existence, refusing to idealise her wasted face and body, or to reconstitute her final image outside of time as some beatific figure at peace.

Most people in 1870s France still accepted the idea of a good death as one in which consolation was offered to the dying through prayers, last rites and religious burial.<sup>20</sup> The Church was anxious at this time to retain its

control over rites of passage such as death. By bringing the catechism to the young and then sermonising in church, the clergy taught about the corruptible body and the immortal soul. At the deathbed they administered the last rites and comforted the bereaved, followed by the committal of the body at burial and the saying of masses for the dead.

Radical republicans, however, were starting to challenge Catholic control over the rites of death, in the belief that Catholicism fostered a climate of fear and that individuals should take control of their own lives. The 1870s saw the start of an initially small movement in France of non-believers planning to go through with civil burials, although this met with much resistance within families that included Catholic believers.<sup>21</sup> Monet may well have felt that Camille had an individual right to choose the last sacrament and a religious leave-taking, but we know that his own decision was firmly for a civil burial. He never made a will laying out what he wanted for his own burial, but it is clear that he had instructed his family on this matter. Blanche Hoschedé (daughter to Alice and later Monet’s step-daughter) tells us that Monet ‘always said that he wanted a civil burial because he was not a



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**5** *Mme Récamier on her Deathbed*, 1849  
Achille Dévéria (1800–57)  
Lithograph, 34×50cm  
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris

**6** *Madame Mazois sur son lit de mort*, 1866  
Regnault Alexandre-Georges-Henri (1843–71)  
Oil on canvas, 65.7×63cm  
Musée d’Orsay, Paris  
© RMN/ Hervé Lewandowski



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practising [Christian]’ and we know that his burial involved no church ceremony.<sup>22</sup> In Richard Kendall’s words, ‘so profound a disjunction from the dominant values of his age...should surely be difficult to ignore.’<sup>23</sup>

This was a period in which Radical republicans developed what Jennifer Hecht called ‘an eschatological vision in which the triumph of science over faith coincided with a worldly utopia of equality, democracy, and self-fulfilment’.<sup>24</sup> The Catholic doctrine of the afterlife lay in tatters, as far as this group was concerned.<sup>25</sup> Death, however, remained a problem for atheistic Radicals: it might be alright to believe in the importance of this life instead of an afterlife, but the end of life remained a decidedly negative affair in individual terms, however much society went on improving or getting more enlightened.

It was in this context that in 1876 the Society of Mutual Autopsy was founded.<sup>26</sup> The first brain autopsied by will was that of the Radical Louis Asseline in 1878,<sup>27</sup> while the autopsy of Gambetta’s brain in 1882 received considerable press attention. The society had a distinctly Radical aura then and the more staunchly republican papers tended to report its activities positively, while it seemed distinctly threatening to the Catholic Church. This society was a way of affirming atheism and contributing in a materialist way to a progressive afterlife. Members donated their brains and enough money to dissect that brain, as well as supplying information about their own health and abilities in order to allow supposed deductions to be made.

The template will and testament that members received described religion as

**18/** These strokes, based on some sort of *chapelle blanche* arrangement, are often read these days as expressionist slashes of anguish with no relation to what is being painted. See, for example, R. Brettell, *Impressionism: Painting Quickly in France, 1860–1890*, New Haven, 2000, p. 138: ‘the slashing linear strokes that define and dissect the subject have a raw emotional power’. Brettell understandably finds it difficult to identify a realist basis for some of the strokes. Richard Cork (‘Impressions of despair’, *New Statesman*, 1 September 2003) sees such strokes as desperate efforts ‘to bring her back to life’ rather than as clinical dissection. Jean Louis Schefer, in the *Ombres et lumières* catalogue (Paris, 2005, p. 60), reaches for the metaphor of the waves of a stormy sea in order to account for the same strokes.

**19/** Badone, op. cit. in n. 17 above, p. 63.

**20/** T. Kselman, *Death and the Afterlife in Modern France*, Princeton, 1993, p. 88.

**21/** In Thomas Kselman’s words, ‘decisions about whether to bury someone using a catholic or a civil service caused consternation in families throughout the period’ (Kselman, op. cit. in n. 20 above, p. 109).

**22/** Quoted in J.-P. Hoschedé, *Claude Monet: ce mal connu*, Geneva, 1960, vol. I, p. 164. This is confirmed in Wildenstein, vol. IV (1985), p. 142, n. 1327, which quotes from *Notes Posthumes de Blanche Hoschedé-Monet*. Monet’s own written instructions seem to be quoted from a contemporary article by Jean Botrot, ‘A Giverny avant les obsèques de Cl. Monet’, published in *Le Journal* (8 December 1926), pp. 1–2, and indicate a desire for a simple funeral. Accounts of the burial make it clear that there was no ceremony in the church and no Christian rite (Wildenstein vol. IV, pp. 143–44).

**23/** R. Kendall, ‘Monet, atheism and the “antagonistic” forces of his age’ in F. Fowle (ed.), *Monet and French Landscape: Vétheuil and Normandy*, Edinburgh, 2006, p. 131. Kendall draws attention to Monet’s preference for free-thinking and atheistic friends.

**24/** J. Hecht, *The End of the Soul*, New York, 2003, p. 3.

**25/** The Radical republican politician Paul Bert proclaimed the importance of educational progress, teaching the student to devote himself ‘to everything that can work for the development of man’ as against religious education wherein this world’s primary concern was only ‘to render yourself worthy of Heaven’. The secular outlook was said to give one confidence in one’s own powers, whereas the religious outlook worked against the individual’s sense of his own worth and his potential for personal progress (R. Rémond, *L’Anticléricalisme en France de 1815 à nos jours*, Brussels, 1976/1985, p. 192).

**26/** Hecht, op. cit. in n. 24 above, and J. Hecht, ‘French scientific

materialism and the liturgy of death: the invention of a secular version of Catholic last rites (1876–1914)’, *French Historical Studies*, vol. 20, no. 4 (Fall 1997), pp. 703–35.

**27/** Thulié’s autopsy report made much at the start of Asseline’s Radical politics, including the seizure of the first issue of the *Revue encyclopédique* under the Second Empire, the suppression of *La Libre Pensée*, the struggle over *La Pensée Nouvelle*, and his involvement with papers such as the *Radical*, *Peuple souverain*, *Rappel and Correspondence libérale* (H. Thulié, ‘Communications. Sur l’autopsie de Louis Asseline...’, *Bulletins de la Société d’anthropologie de Paris*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1878), pp. 161–67, available online at <http://www.persee.fr>).

**28/** Hecht, op. cit. in n. 24 above, p. 13.

**29/** Ibid., p. 14.

**30/** Ibid., p. 15.

**31/** Ibid., p. 15.

**32/** E. Véron, *L’Esthétique*, Paris, 1878/1890, pp. xxiv, 153, 325.

**33/** For a further development of a Radical reading of Monet, see A. Lewis, ‘Reading Monet’s Garden at Vétheuil (1881) Radically’ in Fowle, op. cit. in n. 23 above, pp. 31–69.

**34/** Botrot, op. cit. in n. 22 above.

'hostile to the development of science' and called for body parts not required for scientific study to be buried in a civil ceremony 'without any religious ritual'.<sup>28</sup> Such wills became a means to clarify one's Radicalism and to encourage one's fellow-members in their open commitment to atheism, since illness and approaching death were often times when clerics were able, if not to draw atheists back into the fold, at least to reinstate the role of the Church for the sake of the wider family's peace of mind. André Lefèvre's will donating his brain and asking for the rest of his body to be incinerated proclaimed him faithful 'to the radical Republic' and intending 'to die without the interference of any priest or church'.<sup>29</sup>

One needs to remember the persistence of the doctrine of bodily resurrection when one reads Radical statements about the disposal of body parts such as those of Claudius Chaptal, who wanted no burial of them because he 'attach[ed] no importance whatsoever to such rotting garbage'.<sup>30</sup> The ethic was about looking death in the face and not flinching from what was seen.

Similarly, the will of the Radical-socialist Eugène Véron, a founder member of the society, proclaimed that there be no ceremony after his death in order to limit the 'evil' of the Church's influence. It asserted that he attached 'no type of importance at all to that assemblage of decomposing matter which has lost the ability to feel and to think and of which the elements now do nothing but increasingly dissociate from each other', adding that he did not want 'after my death, to contribute, even a little, to the accumulation of the wealth of the clergy, against which I have combated all my life and that never ceased to do to France and to the Republic all the evil in its power'.<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, Véron was an historian and aesthete whose 1878 tract *L'Esthétique* connected the development of art with a radical republican version of history triumphing in individual liberty. Véron celebrated 'the manifestation of individual impressions' as the only real art, and championed the artist's touch as the arena in which the sensations of the eye and operation of the human spirit come together.<sup>32</sup>



7 *Portrait d'A. Thiers sur son lit de mort*, 1877  
Braun & cie  
Photograph on albumin  
paper, 8.9×12.6cm  
Bibliothèque de la ville de Colmar



8 *Postmortem*, c. 1850  
Alphonse Le Blondel (1814–75)  
Photograph, 8.9×11.9cm  
© The Metropolitan Museum of Art/  
Art Resource, New York

This Radical worldview held by the Society of Mutual Autopsy is pertinent to Monet in the late 1870s.<sup>33</sup> Monet did not make an open declaration of his Radical atheism in any will, though he does seem to have left instructions that even flowers from his garden should not be wasted on his funeral.<sup>34</sup> However, his painterly dissection of his dead wife is driven by a similar outlook. He has presented a real corpse, with whom he feels less of a connection than with the person when alive, thus resisting the power of religion to invest meaning in death. Monet's deflationary gaze – suggesting that the body has lost the ability to feel and to think, and that the human spirit has simply gone – suggests a resistant artist who placed himself

in opposition to his closest friends as they invested her death with spiritual meaning. Monet might even have felt that he had gone far enough in accommodating his wife and friend Alice's desire for a Catholic departure. Time now to leave his own testament about the nature of her dying, to make his contribution to the cause of truthfulness. Monet would have his own secularised and Radical version of the *veillée mortuaire*, in which he would work through his own grieving process while at the same time scientifically registering the exact nature of his beloved's death. **A**

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